

Hit The Beach!

The Southern California ASL Club Newsletter



June 2003 Volume 8, Number 2

The President's Corner

by Jim Aikens

Investing In ASL...

A lot has happened since the last issue of *Hit The Beach!* First, we have a new location for West Coast Melee. Thanks to the efforts of our "Site Selection Committee" (Rob Feinstein, Dave Nicholas, Paul Simonsen, Eric Visnowski and Ron Møsher) we will, in 2004, be moving to the Crown Plaza Hotel in Irvine, right across from John Wayne Airport. Crown Plaza is comparable in quality to Embassy; a real first-class location. The ballroom is larger and we will have a larger room for the 'Early Bird' program, plus a private room that will serve as a member's lounge on Thursday and Friday. The sleeping rooms are conventional size (not suites) with a very reasonable \$79 rate (including free breakfast). Parking will be only \$4 per day and there's a free airport shuttle. All in all, a superb location at a price so much below Embassy's, we will be able to cut the registration fees by \$5 across the board.

Along with our new WCM venue, we will be revising the tournament format. Starting next year, WCM will consist of three rounds of open-format 'melee', after which the 16 highest scoring players will advance to an old-fashioned, fixed round, single elimination format. Plaques will be awarded for 1st through 4th place in the Melee. The rest of us can duke it out in a Mini-Tournament, or one of our other events, or just play for fun. This new format has something for everyone; hard-edged competition for the grogs, laid back ASL for the rest of us. Plus, you can expect to see all those things that make WCM what it is; our '7-0 Leaders', the 'Hero Game', our themed Mini-Tournaments, the 'Early Bird' program, color tee-shirts and great plaques. We are experimenting with a couple of other new programs as well, including a new Team-tournament format and a Campaign Game competition. With a new location and a new format, I guarantee that West Coast Melee VII will be our best tournament yet.

On the Club level, things couldn't be better. We've got some great One Day events lined up this year. Thanks to the sales of Melee Pack I and some good fiscal conservatism, the Club has been able to build up

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Marching Orders

by Matt Cicero

Another great SoCal Event...another issue of *HTB!* What more can you ask for in ASL? Ok, ok...I'd like to be able to memorize the rulebook flawlessly also. And yeah, I'd like to have three days a week free of work to play ASL. And sure, I admit it...my very own ASL game room would be so much cooler in my house than a guest room...after all, who needs guests if I'm playing ASL three times a week, eh?

This issue we have a terrific contribution from the world renowned ASLer, Chas Argent. When Chas isn't busy designing first class scenarios, he spends his time writing about them! I happened to steal his gem "The Story Behind the Scenario: The Taking of Takrouna [ASL 51]" off his desk when he wasn't looking so I could publish it here for you!

Also this issue I was able to track down the SoCal Club's fearless leader, Jim Aikens, and squeeze a few words out of him for our *Roll Call!* feature.

Oh Joy! [J22] is a prominent part of this issue as well. We have a side-by-side comparison of German setups for your satisfaction, another *OUCH!* anecdote and a Scenario Cheat Sheet all based on *Oh Joy!*

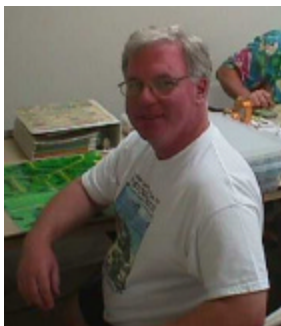
Our Gringo de Mayo event in May was a stunning success. I highly recommend both the BBQ and the open team format for any future event any club might pull together. It really is a nice easy way to draw in new players and let them get to know the club members. I know one of our newest mem-

ber, Ed Kemp, had a great time and is already looking forward to the next One-Day! The greatest satisfaction was the gleam in Ed's eye at the end of the day that told us all...we had secured another convert. Our work was done.

As always, please consider writing an article for a future issue. I am especially interested in reviews of scenarios you've enjoyed, books you've read, tactics you've used and products you've tried.

Till next time!

Editor@socalasl.com



Gringo de Mayo and the Main Event AAR

by Matt Cicero and Sheldon Ryland II

When SoCal ASLers get together for a BBQ, they have so much fun, they invent new holidays! Gringo de Mayo.

Yup, by any measure, this year's late spring One-Day event was a roaring success. Bryan Earll hosted our event with a decked out backyard with plenty of room for the 20+ folks that showed up. The weather was cool and comfortable. The food was just plain awesome...from the excellent Carne Earll-sada to the Romey Rocket-Rice to the selection of beverages from imported beers to homemade lemonade.

Bryan ran a mean grill, tempting us with BBQ chicken as an appetizer before the main event of burritos with carne asada and all the trimmings. Heck, I would have showed up just for the food...especially since the entire repast was FREE, happily sponsored by the SoCal ASL Club. But we had ASL to play as well!

I had the pleasure of organizing the ASL for the day. "Flamethrowers" was the theme of the day and folks found a nice selection of scenarios with incendiary devices to keep them busy. The format was a new one...everyone at the One-Day was randomly assigned to a team...Russian or German...and their wins counted toward the Team VP Total. To make things interesting, Bryan Earll and I developed a scenario that would serve as the Main Event for the day...a little smash-mouth piece set in Stalingrad featuring waves of reinforcements and some seriously elite formations. The fun part was making the Main Event a tag-team event...pairs of players were "airlifted" out of their

individual games in order to play a turn of the main event. Victory Locations taken in the Main Event were added to the Team VP Total. By the end of the day, we had played 5 turns of the Main Event and 11 individual games resulting in a resounding victory for the German Team.

The lighthearted team tourney combined with the terrific food made this one of SoCal's most successful events ever. I have a feeling we may try this again next year and continue the new SoCal tradition...of Gringo de Mayo!

So what happened at the Main Event? Well, Sheldon had a primo seat at the table and decided to jot down a few notes and quotes from the goings on during the day...a semi neutral commentary, if you will, since it sometimes seemed that he had an endless stream of advice for anyone who would listen. Here's the Turn by Turn AAR.

(R=Russian Player, G=German Player)

Turn 1:

Commentary: Russians get good position in Big Factory but lose 7 squads to 1 in HtH. German reinforcements held up by Booby Traps.

R: "Hand to Hand went real bad... advice...roll lower if in HtH...lost 7 squads to 1!"

G: "Don't forget: pick up Russian SWs"

Turn 2:

Commentary: Russian brings on a tank rather than infantry and rams it straight up

the middle. Players seem to be playing their 1-Turn "game" using their "end-game" moves. Russians surge and take 5 Locations. It's looking bad for the Germans in the big factory. Germans bring on more swinging d#kks. When German AT gun gacks his smoke shot against the Russian HMG nest, he fires off the much harder HE shot...and crushes the nest!

R: "Kicked Ass!!; It's only one turn!"

G: "Don't forget: pick up the DC."

R: "Walking in the open with a FT is a BAD IDEA."

Sheldon: "When you ELR a leader, he changes his name in shame."

Turn 3:

Commentary: Russian prep kills a tank and a FT-toting halfsquad and breaks the German front line...but no Russian troops were left to follow up on the gains. German IFs his gun and breaks it then snakes a FT shot...too bad they weren't reversed! Russian holding onto 9 Locations. A Russian demo does nothing but create a German hero. More Germans head for the Bloody Big Factory. Germans are rallying all over. Russian breaks his own squad in the factory when he shoots into a melee...and ber-serks the Germans. Russians lose ground on the southern flank...down to 6 Locations.

G: "Pick up the Russian FT. Pick up the LMG"

G: "I'm incompetent, but I knew that!"
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The Dog Days of Summer Return !!!

Next up on our One Day Event schedule is the Dog Days of Summer event at Biola on August 8! Robert Hammond is pulling together another batch of "nearly-ready-for-print" scenarios for us to give the final once over. Using his patented scoring system based on something called "calculus" Robert will be able to figure out precisely who is the best darn player to show up and throw dice. My understanding is that this year's system has been slightly improved to include additional categories for points such as "dice cup flair", "poise under pressure" and "counter antiquity". Seriously, Robert has a great system and it works well...so make sure you set the date and join us!

The Club will be sponsoring a tub of drinks for everyone but you'll have to provide for yourself at lunchtime (no BBQ at Biola...darn!). Please remember that no alcoholic beverages are allowed on campus. Please also remember that there is no One Day fee for members and a modest \$5 for guests. Directions and contact info will be posted on the website.

See you there!!

Words That Echo...

"We have suffered together and we shall conquer together."

Winston Churchill
Ottawa, Canada
December 30, 1941

Roll Call! ...Jim Aikens!

HTB!: Where are you from?

JA: Abington, MA, about half way between Boston and Plymouth MA.

HTB!: Any military experience?

JA: None whatever, though I intend at some point to enlist as a Civil War Reenactor, would that count?

HTB!: What got you started with ASL? When?

JA: Like most ASLers, I started out as a teenage board wargamer in the very early 1970s starting with *Gettysburg '66*. I recruited my younger brother as my primary opponent and we played a buttload of various games, including *France 1940* and *Ricktoffen's War*. In high school, we hooked up with a group of wargamers, guys who I've stayed in touch with all these years. We played mostly multi-player games like *Third Reich* and *Diplomacy*. By 1977, when SL came out, our game group had split up, going off to various colleges. I tried to interest my brother in SL but by this time he was heavily into strategic level games (and still is). I played a little in college and some solitaire. I kept up buying the modules, but didn't play much. I bought ASL when it first came out, right about the time I was moving to CA. In 1986 I answered a gamestore ad looking for guys to play ASL. The ad was placed by SoCal ASL's own Eric Johnson and our first 'Club' meeting consisted of me, Eric, Don Petros and Jim Arnn. Rob Feinstein joined us shortly after that initial meeting. Although Jim Arnn faded away (though he's recently resurfaced), Don, Eric, and Rob have remained my good friends ever since.

HTB!: How did you learn the game?

JA: Well, when I started, ASL was new, so the group of us sort of learned it together. Eric Johnson particularly has a knack for reading something and being able to explain it in simple terms. As for tactics, I think anyone in that group would agree that getting a weekly ass-kicking from Rob Feinstein was what sharpened our skills as players. We played weekly at Rob's house for quite a few years and that group became an incubator for new players, and included a lot of names you might recognize...like Chuck Hammond, Herman Frettlorh, Paul Sugru and Chad Cummins. Early into the process, we started traveling to L.A. to ASL tournaments and later traveled to Baltimore for Avaloncon and later still to ASLOK. Rob, Eric and I have traveled as a group, to Avaloncon or ASLOK, every year since 1993. Traveling to tournaments, especially national ones, will really sharpen your ASL skills.

HTB!: Why do you like ASL over other leisure activities?

JA: Board wargaming has always been a great source of enjoyment for me, and ASL is the best board wargame ever developed. I particularly like the almost real-time aspect of Defensive First Fire. This concept was revolutionary at the time, and few board wargames, then or since, can match that level of excitement. I still play a few non-ASL games, mostly Civil War, but 95% of my game time goes to ASL.

HTB!: How do you like to play ASL? FtF, Tournaments, VASL...

JA: For me, ASL is a social experience, the individual scenario is secondary, so FtF has the primary appeal. Since I have the luxury of multiple opponents in close proximity, I have no need to use VASL. Of course, if I lived in Ottumwa, IA...well any ASL is better than none, right? I love tournaments, but much prefer open format-types to fixed round, because I don't like to be limited over scenario choices and time. That's why I travel to ASLOK every year and not Noreaster.

HTB!: Do you like to play Fast? Slow? Medium?

JA: I'd say I generally take the lead of the opponent I'm playing, but I will

never play slowly. My personal preference is as fast as possible, and left to my own devices, I would describe myself as a fast player. On the other hand, I think most players over-estimate their own speed of play.

HTB!: How often do you get to play?

JA: Generally once per week, at my Thursday night CG session at my office. Plus the One Day events, a little at WCM, and a whole bunch at ASLOK.

HTB!: Let's talk about some of your favorites in ASL...

Favorite vehicle?

JA: Tough question, for me it depends on the situation. I'm a big fan of Stuart tanks, especially the British versions. They're great for the run-and-gun high-velocity attacks that I really enjoy. Combined with Carriers for infantry transport and bypass freeze, they are irresistible if well handled. In general, I like vehicles with speed and good hitting power. A fast tank, well handled, is always a dangerous thing.

Favorite nationality?

JA: I don't have a particular favorite. I think that's a reflection on how well the game balances the war's perspective. Every nationality has its own characteristics that make it interesting to play.

Favorite troop type?

JA: I like American and British paratroopers. Tough bastards with good leadership and a few machine guns. With either of those troop types, you know you're going to be playing ASL at its best.

Favorite theater of war?

JA: Overall, Western Front in the early war, with Eastern Front a strong second. Of course, you could talk me into a good 'ole fashion Marine beach landing just about any time.

Favorite tactical situation? Why?

JA: I love the high-velocity assaults. The combined arms, early-war blitzkrieg stuff, lots of early war tanks and infantry in HTs...or late-war Russian 6-2-8s riding swarms of T34s. I'm also a fan of city fights, like RB, VotG or ABtF. I think both cases showcase the very best that ASL has to offer. In any case, my favorite tactical situation is to be on the attack.

Favorite scenarios? Ok, list your Dogs, too...

JA: My all-time favorite is 'Rockets Red Glare' (give the Germans the balance). 'Arm and a Leg' is great for a quick, one-hour game. My least favorite is Siam Sambal. Not that it's a bad scenario, I'm sure it's balanced since I've lost repeatedly as both sides. I just can't win it. 'Lambs to the Slaughter' is the most unbalanced scenario I have ever played. In General, I tend to avoid scenarios where OBA is going to play a significant role. I think OBA is a necessary evil in the ASL game system.

Favorite product produced to date? Why?

JA: I think, pound-for-pound, ABtF is my favorite overall. The CG is great and all the scenarios I've played have been very fun. It has a nice historical map and a ton of counters. It will, however, be eclipsed by VotG when it finally arrives. I've done some playtesting on that module. It will be the biggest thing to hit ASL since Red Barricades.

HTB!: What do you think about DYO? Ever tried it?

JA: I played a lot of DYO at Rob Feinstein's house with the old San Diego Club. And I still like it. Anything with variable OBs appeals to me.

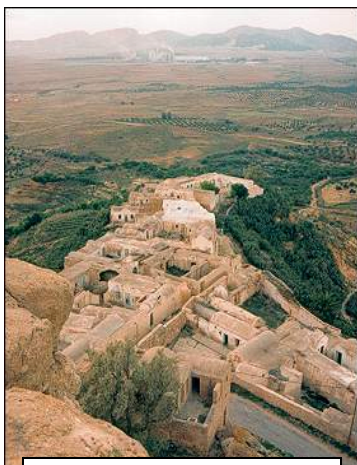
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Another typical CG Date for Jim's Germans.

The Story Behind The Scenario: The Taking of Takrouna [ASL 51]

by Chas Argent



Takrouna

time, in fact, that Panzer Army Africa, in conjunction with General von Arnim's Fifth Panzer Army, was able to launch Operations *Fruhlingwind* (Spring Breeze) and *Morgenluft* (Morning Air) which culminated in the battle at Kasserine Pass in February. After withdrawing from these offensives, Rommel was able to re-occupy the Mareth defenses before the arrival of the British.

But Mareth was breached on March 20th and the linkup between the two Allied armies achieved on April 8th at Wadi Akarit. In reaction to the Tunisian terrain, however, Eighth Army was forced to adjust its tactics. For two years battles had been fought primarily in flat desert, where control of such minimal features as Ruweisat Ridge at El Alamein and the escarpments at Sidi Rezegh had proved decisive over the adjacent terrain. Tunisia, with its jagged peaks and rock strewn valleys, was to be an entirely different story. In [An Army At Dawn](#), Rick Atkinson notes that the terrain was so difficult that even pack mules were often unusable and one man in every four was needed to carry ammunition.

The next defensive feature beyond Mareth was the so-called Enfidaville Line, named for the coastal town that anchored its eastern end. The mountains to the west tapered down to the coastal plain here and dominating ridges were common. The nearest of these was Takrouna, a small village built on a 600-foot tall rocky peak, capped off by a white mosque. Takrouna was defended by more than 300 Italian troops of the Folgore and Trieste Divisions who were "stiffened" by a platoon of Germans from the 104th Panzer Grenadiers. It was unlike any objective in Eighth Army's experience and the stakes were enormous: capturing Takrouna would allow Eighth Army access to Enfidaville and then to the final prize, Tunis. But this assault would represent a watershed moment for the British. The desert army would have to adapt its thinking or be swallowed up by the mountains.

The task was assigned to the 28th (Maori) Battalion of the 2nd New Zealand Division and if any unit in Eighth Army could be called killers these were the men. In support of the Maoris would be 168 guns and two additional infantry battalions, the 21st and the 23rd. A late evening march on April 19 through olive groves and cactus hedges put the attacking units in position but the timetable of this initial movement was upset due to the effort required to reach the start line. Planning efforts had not yet adequately compensated for the change in terrain from open desert to rugged and

confusing Tunisia. The assault was launched at 11pm. Without delay, the attack dissolved into a series of furious room-to-room fights and casualties soared on both sides. Nearly every Maori company commander was wounded and the Maoris became increasingly disorganized as the night wore on. By morning they had established a foothold around the base of the citadel. As each side was reinforced, a constant ebb and flow ensued as the same rooms and stairwells were fought for again and again.

Throughout the 20th - the day the scenario takes place - artillery fire hammered the peak as the battle raged below. The stout buildings offered some protection to the defenders but as the day progressed, it looked as if Takrouna might fall. Twice the pinnacle was reported cleared, only to be mysteriously reoccupied by Italians. It was later discovered that a secret trap door allowed access to the village below and Italian troops had been shuttling back and forth between the mosque and the village. Throughout the day, Maori companies were slowly decimated. By the end of the battle the New Zealanders had sustained more than 450 casualties.

Finally, the next morning, the mosque was stormed by a small force from #10 Platoon of B Company, commanded now by two sergeants. After an arduous assault that lasted nearly three hours, under constant mortar and machine-gun fire, the surviving band of Maoris, led by Sergeant Haane Manahi, scrambled one-by-one up the steep slope that led to the pinnacle. By the time the mosque fell to the remaining four men, the New Zealanders had killed more than forty enemy troops and captured an additional 150. Manahi was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his efforts, though he had initially been recommended for the Victoria Cross. General Brian Horrocks, commander of 30th Corps, had this to say about Takrouna in his autobiography [A Full Life](#): "...in my opinion, it was the most gallant feat of arms I witnessed in the course of the war, and I was bitterly disappointed when Sergeant Manahi, whom we had recommended for a V.C., only received a D.C.M." For years, many of Manahi's Maori countrymen, and many others within the military, worked to rectify the oversight, to no avail. Manahi was killed in a car wreck in 1986, and efforts continue to this day to have his award changed to the V.C.



The Mosque



Sergeant Manahi

Montgomery, who as a rule was unwilling to attack without the odds enormously in his favor, had relied heavily upon sheer firepower to smash his way through these rough mountain places. But the method really didn't play very well any longer. The army was learning that mountains can swallow men and muscle together. These lessons of Tunisia would be affirmed in many more battles before the curtain finally fell on the Axis in North Africa on May 12. It wouldn't take long to apply these valuable lessons, for during the Tunisian campaign the Allies had been busily preparing for the invasion of Sicily, another mountainous place. And after that would come Italy.

A Tale of Two Setups: The German Defense in Oh Joy! [J22]

by Jim Aikens and David Myers

Great scenarios offer players a variety of choices for attack and defense. I think one of the more interesting things to discover is how good players approach great scenarios. This issue we have two great players, Jim and David, giving us their versions of the German setup for a terrific scenario, Oh Joy! [J22]. Check out their setups on the maps on Pages 6 and 7. —ed.

Saving the Best for Last by Jim Aikens

Here's my setup, plus a few comments of explanation.

W40 Trench; W41 Trench; W42 Trench

Since the Trenches are needed for Victory, I want them as far to the rear as possible...make him fight for every hex in between. Note that a unit in W40 could slip easily out of sight behind the wall in trench W41. Nice reverse slope.

W41 StuG IIIB; W42 StuG IIIB; W44 Pz IIIB; W45 SPW 251/10

In order for the Russian to rack up the big VP advantage, he'll need to kill the German armor. I want his armor to come to mine. By placing it far to the rear, I can easily position it to meet the Russian armored assault. The PSW is fodder, hopelessly vulnerable, pretty much easy VPs. Best to let it hide and live as long as possible and make the Russian spend time digging it out. In W45, it will get the first shot against any armored assault. W41 (facing X39) is a nice hull-down position. I always try to keep my armor in pairs for flank protection if possible, hence the W42 position (facing Y42).

Y39 467/LMG; Y41 8-1/467/MMG; Y42 447

The Y39 position is to cover a flanking move from the gully. Y41 is a key fire position.

Y44 7-0/DC

This is a reserve position. I can move the 7-0 where I need him and he can use the DC if he gets a good chance. Since I only have 2 leaders and one of them is on the firing line, I want this one fairly far to the rear to start.

Z39 3 x ?

This makes him set up in DD41 and Prep. He can't leave this stack sitting there, even if he *thinks* it's dummies.

Z41 447; Z42 447/ATR

I'm keeping the ATR in the middle. With a shift of 1 hex, he can cover either road.

Z43 548/LMG

My other key fire position. Like the Y41 position, I give the toughest guys the hardest jobs.

AA41 447; AA42 467/LMG

The AA42 position can not be hit in Russian initial Prep. This makes it a critical spot and not really too exposed, as there's good rout paths out.

AA44 447; AA45 6 AP Mines; BB45 6 AP Mines

I like to split my mines into small packets. Some players think the opposite <shrug>. The AA44 position puts fire on the minefield. This is meant to be a small trap.

BB41 2 x ?; BB44 3 x ?

If he decides to attack down the gully, he'll have to Prep BB44, slowing him down a turn.

AA40 1 AT Mine

Take your pick of road hexes, this is as good as any. If he tries to flame the units in Y41, he'll probably stop 2 hexes back, hence AA40.

Giving as Good as You Get by David Myers

My setup favors reserves that reinforce along the main avenue of attack and good rout paths to allow units to retreat and rally. It also favors an eye for an eye approach to CVP to prevent a Russian win. I consider the 10-3, OT-34 and the initial German NMC to be the primary concerns.

I expect the Russians to push on one of the two roads at a pace that allows the Walking Wounded to participate. The key is to shift your infantry to meet that push. Starting with the opening barrage, try to keep rout paths open so broken units can rally rather than become CVP for the Russians. Keep a close eye on the CVP. The Russian should have no problem gathering 20 CVP to win. The German can prevent a Russian victory, however, by inflicting enough casualties...so try to trade squad for squad in CC since you have 9 squads to the Russian 8. Besides, if the Russian infantry gets too tied down, the OT-34 will have to be more aggressive...and that may lead to an opportunity to kill it, take the CVP and force that personal MC on your opponent. Deliberate Immobilization will be the favored tactic against the OT-34, though HEAT and APCR up close might just nab you a kill on a turret hit.

Y40 Trench; X40 Trench; X42 Trench

With three trenches and a playing area width of eight hexes, the trenches will be either side of the center island of buildings.

Y39 467/LMG

This unit covers the north gully and keeps the Russians from sliding down the north to avoid the firepower trained on BB38, AA39 and Z39.

BB38 6 AP Mines; BB41 6 AP Mines; AA40 1 AT Mine

The BB38 minefield blocks this rally point and keeps fire off the kill group in Z41. BB41 stops a quick move up the middle. The AT mines are a token response to the OT-34 driving here to burn up the Z41 group.

Y40 447/ATR, PzIIIB; Y41 StuG IIIB

The PzIIIB covers the BB40 road and AA41. If the OT-34 drives up to BB40, then let loose with APCR and try to eliminate the threat before it takes you down. The squad and the ATR try the same. The StuG covers the road AA40 – CC38 and the AA41 building. These tanks will die in place trying to keep with Russians out of the trenches in X40 and Y40.

Z41 8-1/467/MMG/447/LMG; Y42 548/LMG

The main kill stack for the Germans will try to kill off some Russians in the north or coming up the middle. They can easily fall back to Y42 to cover the south and here is the central position for the Germans to try to move units in and around on turns 2 and 3 to try to gain some CVP or stop the Russian advance.

AA42 447, 247; Y44 447; X44 247

AA42 covers the south front. Y44 covers the AA44 area. X44 covers the gully.

Z43 StuG IIIB

Mirrors the PzIIIB in Y40, taking the shot at the OT-34 if the FT comes in range through CC43.

X42 7-0/DC, 1 x ?; W45 SPW 251/10

The SPW 251/10 and leader serve as a reserve to rally units or to move to support part of the line.

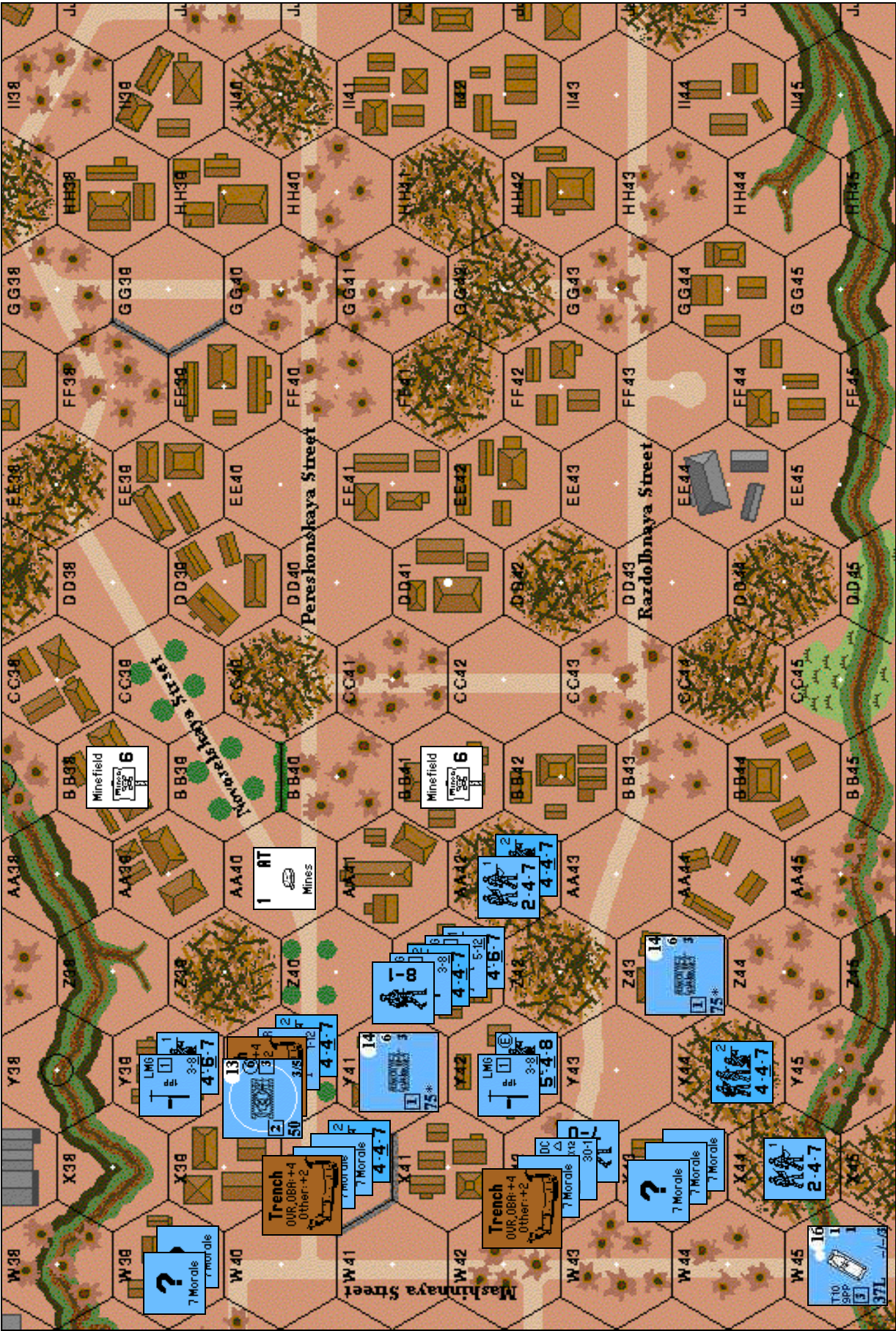
X40 447, 2 x ?; X43 3 x ?; W39 2 x ?

I used three dummies to conceal the units in the trenches. Depending on the Russian set up, they will or will not remain concealed. Five additional ? counters remain to form a stack of three and a stack of two. Hopefully they can draw some fire in the later turns. Just make sure to position them out of LOS from the starting Russian positions or they will be revealed by the opening MC.

Herr Aikens' German Defense for Oh Joy! [J22]

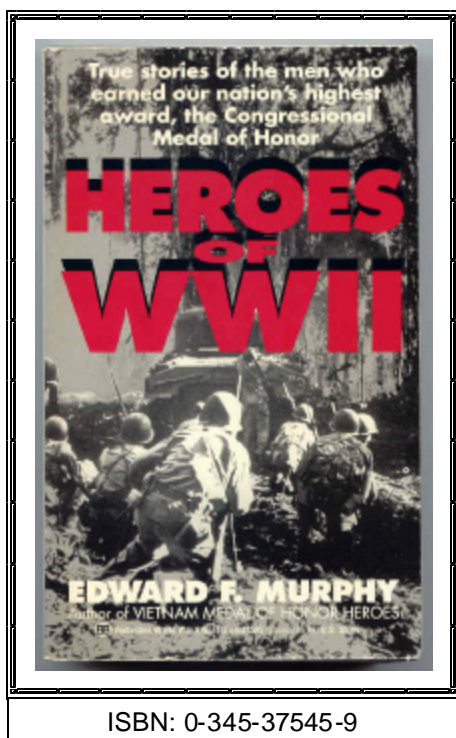


Herr Myer's German Defense for Oh Joy! [J22]



Book Review: Heroes of WWII

by Matt Cicero



Everyone likes a great story about heroes who overcome incredible odds to achieve victory. Probably one of the best sources of such stories are the many men who earned America's highest honor...the Medal of Honor...in World War II. Edward Murphy has gathered together over a hundred MoH stories in his excellent book, Heroes of WWII.

Murphy's work begins with a brief history of the Medal of Honor itself...its creation, its evolution and some basic stats about those who received the award prior to WWII. This chapter nicely covers the basics, though historian buffs will want to dig in a little bit more to flesh out some of the details.

The meat of the book is in the following 18 chapters. Murphy takes the reader on a trip through WWII using his chapters like stepping stones across the world...and across the war. Each chapter is loosely tied to a particular campaign or geographic area...such as "Attack on Pearl Harbor" and "Invasion of Italy and "Bloody Iwo Jima". Murphy provides a terrific color commentary, from a strategic vantage point, of the activity going on in each chapter's subject area. This commentary nicely ties together the gritty tactical narratives of each MoH hero's story which are sprinkled throughout.

Murphy develops an interesting vignette for each MoH recipient in the book. Using personal quotes from the subject himself, anecdotes from those involved in the action and historical research, Murphy manages to capture the unique circumstances and the incredible actions that led to the awarding of each MoH. Murphy's heroes are not limited to a single service, either. He has managed to capture the finest each service had to offer...and even discusses a few that took decades to finally receive their much deserved recognition.

As you read through the book, a few things begin to become apparent. First, the factual accounts related by Murphy begin to take on a somewhat unbelievable quality...almost like

they truly are fictional stories that may someday form the basis of a movie. The actions of these men are just that amazing. Second, you find yourself keeping a mental tally of each man's exploits, comparing them to each other to see who is the most "heroic" or whether you think a man really deserved the award after all. Third, you gain a truer understanding and appreciation of the qualities of heroism and courage.

Murphy rounds out his book with a complete listing of every MoH recipient including their unit and the date and place of their awarded action. I found this section very interesting, though it made me want to download the data so that I could sort the info by unit or by location.

I like this book on many levels. The vignettes are quick to read. The stories make you gasp in wonder. The background material stirs your interest in WWII. I think it is a potential source for ASL scenarios...and obviously the good folks at Schwerpunkt would agree! But I think the real value is in the simple way the exploits of these men are narrated and the impact they have on the reader. I recommend it highly.

Did you Know?

I have to share with you a VASL adventure. During lunch recently, I was watching some VASL games, and 'Gavin Take' was being played by two gentlemen in Italy. They spoke pretty good English but they were playing each other in Italian.

I went to Babblefish (<http://babelfish.altavista.com>) and translated on the fly from Italian to English what they were doing. I translated many of my comments from English to Italian - which they loved. You can select many lines of VASL dialog and paste them directly into Babblefish. It works amazingly well. At one point they complemented my Italian - I then explained to them that I was using Babblefish. They said the translations were quite good.

So, next time you bump into a foreign language VASL game (and assuming its not in Kanji), try Babblefish. You will be making friends around the world.

Ciao!

- Roberto Feinstein

LEGIONS OF WWII: The U.S 10th Mountain Division *by Matt Cicero*

Division Name

United States 10th Mountain Division

Division Nickname

Mountain Division

Division Insignia

The blue background of the patch and the crossed bayonets suggest the infantry, the bayonets also form a Roman number "X" (10) representing the unit's number. The overall shape of the patch is of a powder-keg suggesting the Division's explosive power. Red, white, and blue suggest the national colors. The word "MOUNTAIN" is white on a blue tab affixed directly above the patch.

Division Slogan

"We Climb to Conquer"

Nationality/ Date Created

American / This unique organization came into being on July 13, 1943, at Camp Hale, Colorado as the 10th Light Division (Alpine).

WWII Deployments

Activated: 15 July 1943. *Overseas:* 6 January 1945. *Campaigns:* North Apennines, Po Valley. *Days of combat:* 114. *Returned to U. S.:* 11 August 1945. *Inactivated:* 30 November 1945. *Re-designated:* 10th Infantry Division 10 June 1948. *Reactivated:* 1 July 1948.

Commanding Officers

Commanders: Maj. Gen. Lloyd E. Jones (July 1943-November 1944), Maj. Gen. George P. Hays (November 1944-15 November 1945), Maj. Gen. Lester J. Whitlock (9 August 1948).

WWII Distinctions/Medals

Awards: MH-1 ; DSC-3 ; DSM-1 ; SS-449 ; LM-7; SM-15 ; BSM-7,729.

Traditions/Special Notes

- The 10th Mountain never actually used skis in combat, though they were employed during patrolling.
- Veterans of the 10th Mountain Division were in a large part responsible for the development of skiing into a big name sport and popular vacation industry after World War II. Ex soldiers from the 10th laid out ski hills, built ski lodges, designed ski lifts and improved ski equipment. They started ski magazines and opened ski schools. Vail, Aspen, Sugarbush, Crystal Mountain, and Whiteface Mountain are but a few of the ski resorts built by 10th Mountain veterans.
- An Anecdote: A Mountain Division trooper is on maneuvers atop 13,209-foot Homestake Peak. He picks up the radio voice of a pilot landing at Peterson AFB in Denver. "Am at

11,000 feet, coming in for a landing, gliding gliding gliding," said the pilot. The trooper keys his mike and says "This is Private ----- of the mountain troops, am at 12,000 feet, walking walking walking."

A Brief History

In November 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Finland. Finnish soldiers on skis annihilated two tank divisions, humiliating the Russians. Charles Minot (Minnie) Dole, the president of the National Ski Patrol, saw this as a perfect example of why the U.S. Army needed mountain troops. Dole spent months lobbying the War Department to train troops in mountain and winter warfare. In September 1940, Dole was able to present his case to General George C. Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, who caused the Army take action on Dole's proposals to create ski units.

On December 8, 1941, the Army activated its first mountain unit, the 87th Mountain Infantry Battalion (Later became an entire Regiment) at Fort Lewis, Washington. The unit was dubbed "Minnie's Ski Troops" in honor of Dole. The 87th trained on

Mount Ranier's 14,408 foot peak. The National Ski Patrol took on the unique role of recruiting for the 87th Infantry Regiment and later the Division. After returning from the Kiska Campaign in the Aleutian Islands near Alaska the 87th formed the core of the new Division.

The 10th Mountain Division came into being on July 13, 1943, at Camp Hale, Colorado as the 10th Light Division (Alpine). The combat power of the Division was contained in the 85th, 86th, and 87th Infantry Regiments. The Division's year training at the 9,200 foot high Camp Hale honed the skills of its soldiers to fight and survive under the most brutal mountain conditions.

On June 22, 1944, the Division was shipped to Camp Swift, Texas to prepare for the Louisiana maneuvers of 1944, which were later canceled. A period of acclimation to a low altitude and hot climate was necessary to prepare for this training.

On November 6, 1944, the 10th Division was redesignated the 10th Mountain Division.

The division entered combat on January 28, 1945 in the North Apennine Mountains of Italy. The division faced German positions arrayed along the 5 mile long Monte Belvedere-Monte della Torraccia ridge. Other divisions had attempted to assault Mount Belvedere three times, even holding it temporarily, but none had succeeded. To get to Mount Belvedere the division first had to take a ridge line to the west known to the Americans as the Riva Ridge. The Germans on Riva Ridge protected the approaches to Mount Belvedere. The assault on Riva Ridge was the task of the 1st Battalion and F Company, 2d Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry. After much scouting, it was decided the assault would be at night, a 1,500-vertical-assent. The Germans considered the ridge

(Continued on page 10)



to be impossible to scale and manned it with only one battalion of mountain troops. The attack by the 86th on February 18, 1945, was a complete success and an unwelcome surprise to the Germans.

Mount Belvedere was assaulted next. Belvedere was heavily manned and protected with minefields. Shortly after the 86th assault on the Riva Ridge, the 85th and 87th Regiments made a bayonet attack without covering artillery fire on Belvedere beginning on February 19th. Again the surprise of the assault was successful and after a hard fight, the peak was captured. Realizing the importance of the peak, the Germans made seven counterattacks over two days. After the first three days of intense combat, the division lost 850 casualties, including 195 dead. The 10th had captured over 1,000 prisoners. The 10th was now in a position to breach the German's Apennine Mountain line, take Highway 65 and open the way to the Po Valley.

On April 14, 1945, the final phase of the war in Italy began. With the 85th and 87th leading, the 10th Mountain Division attacked toward the Po Valley spearheading the Fifth Army drive. The fighting was fierce with the loss of 553 mountain infantrymen killed, wounded, or missing in the first day.

Early on April 20th, the seventh day of the attack, the first units of the 85th Infantry Regiment broke out into Po Valley. Five days of attack had cost 1,283 casualties. With the German's mountain line broken, the next objective was to cross the Po River.

On the morning of April 23rd, the 10th was the first division to reach the Po River. The first battalion of the 87th Mountain Infantry, the original mountain infantry unit, made the crossing under fire in 50 light canvas assault boats.

The final combat for the 10th Division took place in the vicinity of Lake Garda, a canyon lake at the foothills of the Alps. On April 27, 1945, the first troops reached the south end of the lake, cutting off the German Army's main escape route to the Brenner Pass. The drive was delayed by destroyed tunnels and road blocks. Using amphibious DUKWs, these obstacles were bypassed and the towns of Riva and Tarbole at the head of the lake were captured. Organized resistance in Italy ended on May 2, 1945.

The 10th completely destroyed five elite German divisions. In 114 days of combat, the 10th Division suffered casualties of 992 killed in action and 4,154 wounded.

Since the 10th Mountain Division was one of the last to enter combat, it had been scheduled for use in the projected invasion of Japan. These plans ended with the surrender of Japan in August 1945. After a brief tour of duty in the Army of Occupation in Italy, the 10th was sent to Camp Carson, Colorado. There on 30 November 1945, the 10th Mountain Division was disbanded.

Heroes of the Mountain Division

*MAGRATH, JOHN D. , *Medal of Honor*

Rank and organization: Private First Class, U.S. Army, Company

G, 85th Infantry, 10th Mountain Division.

Place and date: Near Castel d'Aiano, Italy, 14 April 1945.

Entered service at: East Norwalk, Conn.

Birth: East Norwalk, Conn.

G.O. No.: 71, 17 July 1946.

Citation:

"He displayed conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty when his company was pinned down by heavy artillery, mortar, and small arms fire, near Castel d'Aiano, Italy. Volunteering to act as a scout, armed with only a rifle, he charged headlong into withering fire, killing 2 Germans and wounding 3 in order to capture a machinegun. Carrying this enemy weapon across an open field through heavy fire, he neutralized 2 more machinegun nests; he then circled behind 4 other Germans, killing them with a burst as they were firing on his company. Spotting another dangerous enemy position to this right, he knelt with the machinegun in his arms and exchanged fire with the Germans until he had killed 2 and wounded 3. The enemy now poured increased mortar and artillery fire on the company's newly won position. Pfc. Magrath fearlessly volunteered again to brave the shelling in order to collect a report of casualties. Heroically carrying out this task, he made the supreme sacrifice--a climax to the valor and courage that are in keeping with highest traditions of the military service."

Note:

Magrath, age nineteen, was awarded the Medal of Honor, posthumously. In June 1995, Fort Drum, New York renamed its Soldiers Sports Complex as the John D. Magrath Gymnasium. A plaque and portrait at Magrath Gym honor his memory.

ASL Scenarios Featuring the 10th Mountain Division

G13 "A View From The Top": The 10th Mountain Division is ordered to take Mount Torraccia to clear the vital "Riva Ridge" in Italy. German resistance has stiffened on Mount Torraccia and the 10th Mountain finds itself deploying reserves and available air support to attempt to conquer the dug-in defenders of the summit.

When I started digging for some ASL scenarios featuring the 10th, I thought there might be fewer than, say, the 29th Infantry or the Big Red One. In the end, I only found one. Seems to me there might still be a few untapped skirmishes in the mountains of Italy. Any takers? -ed.

CLIMB AND CONQUER!



(**"President's Corner"** Continued from page 1)

the treasury to a healthy level. Gone are the days when Officers held their invoices until WCM so as not to put the Club in debt. So much so that we felt comfortable investing some of those profits back into the ASL hobby in Southern California. I think that one of the things that hurts our efforts to expand the hobby is that the ASLRB and BV keep going out-of-print. Lets face it, it's pretty hard to recruit new members into the hobby when the two core ingredients are chronically unavailable. Over the previous year, we have had several potential new players contact us trying to locate these items. Not much we can do, except tell them to "be patient". But not any more. Starting with the next printing, our Club will order and hold 5 copies of the ASLRB and BV. When these items go back out-of-print, and new members/players contact us, we can offer to sell them a copy of each, combined with a hand-delivered '7-0 Pack' and an offer to set them up with a Club member to teach them how to play. In other words, we're using a portion of the Club's treasury to work toward developing new players and members. And the nice part is, it really doesn't cost the Club any money, since we recoup our expenditure when we sell the modules to newbies. We're simply holding some of our treasury in a non-cash form. This strategy offers no significant risk to the Club financially, as this stock could easily be liquidated into cash should the need arise, and that need is quite unlikely.

Another way of 'investing in ASL' is splurging just a little on our members. First, we've reduced the event charges by \$5. One-Day events are now free for members. WCM registration, reflecting this policy and also the fact we got a great deal on our new location, will also be reduced by \$5. Additionally, the barbecue for the Spring Tournament was free for the members. That \$10 membership renewal is now worth about \$25 in discounts. Not a bad deal.

Speaking of the barbecue, if you couldn't make it, man you missed out. Bryan Earl's carne asada was awesome. Add Mexican beer, salsa, beans, chips, Matt Romey's Spanish rice, oh yeah, well worth the effort. The format was mostly open playing off a theme list. Players also took turns running Matt Cicero's new scenario "Vulcan's Forge". It's played on the RB map, and it's a blast. We had a solid turnout with over 20 guys. On behalf of the Club, I want to thank Bryan Earl and Matt Cicero for (respectively) hosting and running this very fine event. This format was so well received, I've asked Bryan to host "Gringo de Mayo, Dos" next May.

Our next Club event will be at Biola College on August 9th. Robert Hammond has volunteered to serve as "TD for the Day". The format will be multi-round points-based and will feature all new scenarios. It will be very similar to the tournament that Robert ran last spring at Scott Thompson's house. I hope everyone has a great summer. See you all at Biola!

President@socalasl.com

(**"Roll Call"** Continued from page 3)

My scenario 'The Marnach Strongpoint' was originally a DYO-based scenario.

HTB!: CG versus one-shot games...any preference?

JA: Well, you know, I'm kind of known as the king of CGs, since that's what my weekly game group plays. RB, ABtF, BRT, ER, VotG, OVHS...been there, done that. When you have a group of 4-6 players (which we have on Thursday nights) and have a place to leave the game set up and undisturbed by kids or pets (such as the back room at my office), CGs are hard to beat on the ASL fun scale. As a result though, I kind of miss playing the scenarios. For me, that's what WCM and ASLOK are for.

HTB!: Best ASL experience...

JA: Over 18 years, it's hard to single out any one game. I would say, though, our last playing of the BRT CG has to be way up there. We had me, Eric Morton and (module designer) Steve Dethlefsen against (map artist) Don Petros, Fred Timm and Steve Thorne. The chemistry of those six personalities, playing a CG like BRT was an extraordinary experience. We had nights when I'm sure we did more laughing than playing.

HTB!: Worst ASL experience...

JA: Since ASL is very much a social thing for me, personalities are the important part of my gaming experiences. There have been a (very) few games that I've played at out-of-town events where either my opponent had issues with his personal hygiene, or simply was kind of rude, that made the game less than pleasant. And there have been a couple of instances when my opponent was playing so slowly that I wanted to throw myself out a window just to end the game. But those were extremely rare, isolated instances.

HTB!: What Would You Like To Try Next?

JA: VotG. I've playtested various incarnations of the CG over the last 6 years and a few of the scenarios. I can't wait for the finished product

to be published.

HTB!: How could the game be better?

JA: I have some issues with the OBA rules. As I said earlier, I think OBA is a necessary evil in ASL. You can't accurately reflect W.W. II ground combat without it but I wish there was another way to deal with it. I think the rules that deal with it are overly-complicated; perhaps one of the most misplayed and misunderstood facets of the game, especially for newbies. That's not to say that I have a better idea. I don't, but I wish I did.

HTB!: Top 3 things You'd Recommend For Playing ASL?

JA: Go to tournaments or large events as often as you can. There is nothing you can do that will make you a better player quicker than playing in tournaments. Also, try to play with a variety of partners. Guys who repeatedly play each other stop building their skill level to some extent. Tactics become predictable, and often rules get played wrong over and over again. Plus guys who play only one opponent get a little lazy on their etiquette and I think that hurts them in the long run. Finally, always try to get in a game with someone who you know is a very superior player. The one ass-whoopin' you take from him will teach you more than 50 games against inferior opponents.

HTB!: Any Final Comments?

JA: I guess I could rah-rah SoCal ASL, but you can read the President's Corner for that. I guess I would like to say "thanks" to all the guys I've played who read this Newsletter. For me, after 18 years, ASL is still the funnest thing I can do with my clothes on.

Thanks Jim!



("Gringo de Mayo" Continued from page 2)

G: "This is one of those times when being cute ends up being dead."

G: "It's 9, no 8, no 9...why 9? Because that's what I rolled!"

Sheldon: "When wife complains of your weight, host an ASL event then ask 'I don't look so bad, do I?'"

Turn 4:

Commentary: Big Russian blast can push the Germans out of the factory...boxes the 24+1...off to a great start. Russians send reinforcements to shore up the southern flank...but German fire holds them off. Russian fire causes more berserking Germans. Russian follows extensive notes left by predecessor...didn't help, but he followed them! In the factory, noone bothered to tell the Russian where the breaches were...the Germans knew...and the Russians got pasted. The Germans surge and take most of the big factory.

R: "Rally well or suffer the consequences..."

G: "Damn rules: can't fire FT when Pinned."

Turn 5:

Commentary: Russian prep takes out the big German tank. Germans secure the big factory. The German berserker runs into the street carrying a DC. A weak 2-2 shot kills the squad...and everyone agrees the bullet must have hit the DC. The Russian HMG goes on a rate tear and begins vaporizing Germans. On the 6th shot, the Russian commander begs for snakes...and gets it! And cowers, loses rate and the game is over.

R: "How do you say 'Aye Carumba!' in Russian?"

R: "Berzerkers don't scare me none."

G: "Who the hell played in previous turns?!"

R: "Berzerkers with demos are BIG targets."

G: "Somebody kill the #&!@#// HMG!"

Anecdote of the Day:

Some slovenly players left bits of their burrito on the Main Event map...when it was detected via movement...a rules question arose...

Question: "What's the TEM on carne asade?"

Answer: "None, but there is a backblast!"

Now THAT's ASL...

SWEET!...OUCH!

...or Dueling Banjos in Oh Joy! [J22]

Last summer Chuck Hammond and I sat down to a game of *Oh Joy!* [J22] at our Dog Days of Summer One Day Event. I thought I'd share a bit more of this game with you.

Per my **OUCH!** In V7N4, on Turn 2, Chuck moves his conga line of tanks around the corner with the OT-34 in the lead. The big guy stops...and sure enough, I pop him with smoke. Feeling a little repositioning is in order, he starts up again...well, almost...mechanical breakdown roll...12...gack... Immobilized with very little to shoot at.

Now the new part...on my Turn 2, I decide to ESB my PzIIH into a "better" position...sure, sure... play the banjo...12...gack... Immobilized in bypass behind a building. Danga dang DANG Dang...

Turn 3, Chuck ups the ante...his Commissar snags a DC, runs into the open street, ignores my withering fire, slaps the DC onto my now helpless PzIIH then runs back through the resid! The resultant snakes on the placement DR made a huge flaming mess of my tank. Meanwhile, his conga line of T-70s sidles over on the other side of the board to cover the gully.

In my Turn 3, my 548 slips along the gully carrying their DC, ignores all attempts to kill them, CXs out to slap that baby on the nearest T-70...then watches the T-70 explode violently into a flaming wreck. Danga dang DANG Dang...

Yup, ole Chuck and I were in tune that day...and yes, I think I've now milked my playing of *Oh Joy!* for every erg of newsletter energy...

-Matt Cicero



Upcoming Events...

08/09/03: Biola Dog Days of Summer One-Day
08/23/03: *Hit The Beach!* V8N3
11/15/03: Fall One-Day Event (tentative)
11/29/03: *Hit The Beach!* V8N4

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Credits

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